

Understanding the Behavior of Young Children and How to Effectively Respond

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Traditional Behavior Management

- We used to only look at the **FORM** of behavior (hitting, kicking, spitting, cursing, etc.) and figure out how to PUNISH it away.



THIS WORKED!!



- The **problem**: students had nothing to replace the extinguished behavior with, except for more inappropriate actions.

Form versus Function

- The **form** of behavior (e.g., a tantrum) may stay the same, although it can have more than one **function**, or purpose: to access an item, to maintain an adult's attention, or to escape from performing an expected response.
- We determine the need or desire behind the behavior by observing what happens before and after, and what the student **gets** from the action.

Function Allows for Support

- When we look for the **FUNCTION** of the behavior, and not just the **FORM**, we are able to teach **REPLACEMENT** behaviors that allow students to still get their needs met, but in a socially acceptable way.




Behavior is Functional, Not GOOD or BAD

- Behavior is useful = it pays off for the student in some way...(this is why they do the action again)
- We may see the behavior as being "good" or "bad", but the student does it because it is effective to get him what he desires/needs.
- It is adaptive, not maladaptive ~ because it works!

The Function of Behavior

- A social skill is the use of a strategy that gets your wants and needs met.
- Every social interaction you have with a child **teaches** him/her something.
- A student can shape **our** behavior by displaying noncompliance/defiance and watching/noticing the reaction.

The Basics of Behavior

- Behavior **communicates** need
- What do students get or avoid when they engage in problem behavior? 
- Children engage in behavior/s to "get" what they find reinforcing or to "avoid" what they find aversive.

The Basics of Behavior

TO GET:

- What reinforces
- Attention
- A possession
- Stimulation

TO AVOID:

- What is aversive
- Attention
- Task/expectation
- Stimulation

More Basics of Behavior

- There is a functional relationship between the **teaching environment** and **behavior**.
- Functional Relationships
When "X" happens, there is a high degree of likelihood that "Y" will result
Examples: "I can wait patiently for you to finish sharpening your pencil or I can shove you out of my way."

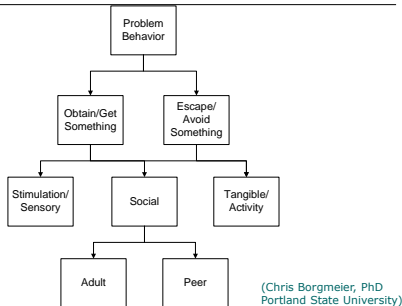
Functional Relationships- Following the Behavior

"If I call my neighbor a Butthead the teacher will give me a look (attention), but if I want to leave class (escape) I need to call the teacher a #\$\$%^&."

- The environment **allows** the student to stop or be removed from the situation and the student behavior maintains or increases.
- The **KEY**: the situation the student is avoiding is aversive to that student.



Functions of Behavior



Functional Assessment of Behavior

- "A process for gathering information used to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of behavioral support" (O'Neill et al., 1997)
 - Operational definition of behavior
 - Identification of events that are functionally related to behavior
 - Identification of consequences that maintain behavior
 - Hypothesis about function of behavior
 - Direct observation to confirm/support hypothesis

****A process for developing an understanding of a person's challenging behavior and, in particular, how the behavior is governed by environmental events.**

FBA Tools:

- Interviews/questionnaires with persons who are most familiar with the child
- Rating scales
- Checklists
- Direct observation of students in target routines and settings (A-B-C)
- Analyze situations that predict challenging behavior
- Trial periods with strategies (Functional Analysis)

FBA Interview

- Define behavior (what you see ->)
- Gather information on setting events
- Identify triggers (predictors of behavior)
- Identify maintaining consequences
- Identify communication functions
- Describe efficiency of problem behavior
- Identify possible reinforcers
- Describe previous efforts

Operational Definition

- Describe the behavior
 - Frequency-how often?
 - Topography-what does it look like?
 - Locus-where?
 - Duration-how long?
 - Latency-time between prompt and behavior?
 - Force or intensity-strength?

**Can you see it when I describe it?



BRIEF Assessment of the Function of Behavior

- If we can predict behavior, we can prevent it.
- Think about it like this: FBA is an **assessment** which supports the creation of a social lesson plan.
- The lesson plan is the **teaching** of a replacement behavior that gets the same need or desire met.
- Two things we do best: assess and teach!



ERASE

problem behavior



Explain - What is the problem?

(Clear definition that could be acted out)

Reason - What is he/she getting out of it or avoiding?

(What is the Function/Pay off of the Behavior? It could be several reasons)

Appropriate - What do you want him/her to do instead?

(What are children who are being appropriate doing?)

Support - How can you help this happen more often?

(How can we get the student to do what others are doing?)

Evaluate - How will you know if it works?

(Simple and quick)

Dr. Terry Scott, University of Florida

Science of Behavior



- Follow the rules and it is **NOT** like looking for a needle in a haystack!
- Our goal: make an educated guess about why the student is doing what he is doing (**create a hypothesis**) so we can guide the student to use new, and hopefully more effective, means of getting needs and desires met.

Three Key Concepts of FBA



- 1) Setting Events
- 2) Triggering Antecedents
- 3) Maintaining Consequences

Setting Events

- Events which happen outside of where we observe (distant events):
 - Argument with parent or sibling at home
 - Previous upset
 - No breakfast
 - Exclusion on playground
 - Past failure with subject matter
 - Unsupervised situations
 - Bus ride
 - Failure to take medication

You know its going to be a bad day when...

Triggers Proceed the Behavior

- Events in the environment "trigger" challenging behavior.
- They serve as cues because the student can predict the outcome.
- They increases the probability that the problem behavior will occur.
- Examples:
 - Person
 - School task
 - Told to do something
 - Told to wait for something
 - Time of day
 - Limited access to preferred activities
 - Verbal confrontation
 - Sensory stimulation

The straw that broke the camel's back

Maintaining Consequences

- Results of the behavior which increase the likelihood that the child will repeat the behavior.
- The environment “gives” something to maintain or increase the behavior; it is reinforcing to **that** student.
- There are no universal reinforcers or aversives.



Decode the Behavior




- Our job: change the triggers in the environment **and** our reactions to the behavior.
- Focus on changing environments, **not** children
- Match intensity of support to intensity of behavior
 - Academic support
 - Targeted group intervention
 - Individual intervention
 - Comprehensive, wraparound support (integrated with family, mental health services)

FBA Outcome

- Develop a hypothesis statement regarding the likely function/s of the problem behavior and the context (social and environmental conditions) in which it is most likely to occur.
- When this occurs.... (demand)
The student does.... (hits)
To get/avoid... (avoid compliance)

FBA: Common Hypotheses

- Receive attention from adults &/or peers
- Receive tangible objects or access to preferred activities
- Avoid interaction with adults & peers
- Avoid tasks or responsibilities
- Obtain or avoid sensory input

*Escape motivated behavior is often masked as attention seeking 

Not Sure About the Hypothesis?

- What would make the challenging behavior stop?
- Is there something you could give the child or let him/her have access to?
- What happens if you let the child leave?
- Is there something that can be removed?

Function-Based Interventions: Positive Behavior Improvement Plans

- Teach replacement behavior that results in same/similar outcomes as the problem behavior
- The environment should not allow problem behavior to result in previous outcomes
- Replacement behavior should work **BETTER** than problem behavior

OLD WAY

- General interventions for all behavior challenges
- Interventions are reactive
- Focus on behavior reduction
- Quick Fix

NEW WAY

- Interventions are matched to the purpose of the behavior
- Interventions are proactive
- Focus on teaching new skills
- Long-term supports

Positive Behavior Intervention Plans

- Describe what behaviors are expected of the student and how they will be **taught** and **supported**.
- Explain the changes in the environment that are designed to alter a student's behavior
 - What adults will do differently in an effort to alter what the child does, both before and after the behavior
 - What academic, schedule (etc.) changes will be made to support new behavior

Positive Behavior Intervention Plans

- Preventative strategies
- Environmental manipulation
- Neutral, ineffective responses by adults
- Consistent consequences
- Meaningful incentives
- Teach and practice replacement behaviors with opportunities for feedback
- Generalize to all environments

Planning Should Make Problem Behavior:

- **Less effective**, by neutralizing setting events and removing antecedents that prompt problem behavior
- **Less efficient**, by selecting replacement behaviors that require less effort to access reinforcers than problem behavior
- **Less relevant**, by decreasing access to consequences that maintain problem behavior and increasing access to consequences that maintain acceptable behavior

(Sugai, Lewis-Palmer & Hagan, 1998)

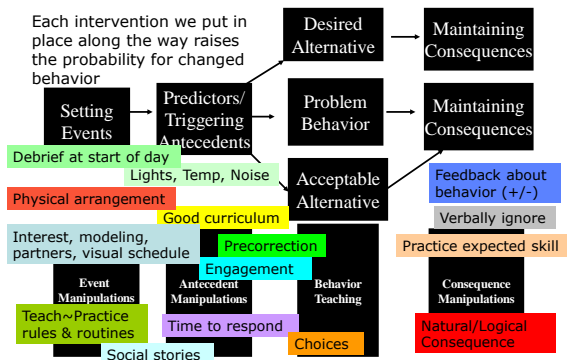
Prevention Strategies

- How can I change the environment to reduce the likelihood that problem behavior will occur?
- What can I do to make the challenging behavior irrelevant?
- How can I remove or alter triggers and/or maintaining consequences?
- How can I minimize the effect of the environment?

Environmental Strategies: EXAMPLES

- Choice
- Calming activities
- Increased attention
- Nurturing support
- Additional supports during transitions/routines
- Visual strategies
- First/Then strategy
- Break down steps of expectation
- Social stories

Competing Pathways: Put in the Roadblocks!



Teach Replacement Behaviors

- Teach alternatives to problem behaviors that are socially acceptable and still get the need met.
- When you can't honor the function of the behavior: teach tolerance of delays
- Teach during calm times
- Practice throughout the day
- Provide reminders to use
- Prompt/assist as needed

Teachable Replacement Skills

- Ask for a break
- Say "all done"
- Ask for help
- Ask for a turn
- Ask for a hug
- Identify and express feelings
- Use support to follow rules
- Anticipate transitions
- Say "No"
- Take turns
- Invite others to play
- Use a picture schedule

Simple Plan Example

The Old Way:

Joe is expected to sit for math.

Joe throws pencils and curses.

Teacher sends Joe to the buddy room so she can do the activity.

The New Way:

Joe is pretaught to request a break.

Joe is expected to sit for math. After completing 5 problems, Joe asks for a break.

Teacher allows Joe to sit at the table with a puzzle so she can finish the activity.

Function?

What about Joe's learning?

?

Differential Reinforcement for Lower Rates of Behavior (DRL)

o Student is reinforced for exhibiting progressively lower rates of the undesired behavior

o Examples:

- A student is reinforced every day they talk out fewer times than the day before
- A student receives a note home for not hurting anyone today

Practice Time!!



- o Each group = a Learning Team
- o Read your scenario
- o Complete Competing Pathways together
- o Share with the group